

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS
UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY
DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

The Prospect in Congress—Naturalization,
Reconstruction, and Negro Suffrage.

From the N. Y. Herald.

From the opening proceedings of the present session of Congress, it is apparent that it will be largely devoted to Southern reconstruction, the naturalization laws, and negro suffrage. These three questions are of the highest importance to the party in power, and therefore challenge the first attention of the two houses.

On the naturalization question we select from the various amendments proposed to the existing laws the instructions given to the Committee of Revision of the House, on motion of Mr. Schenck. They are—First, whether this naturalization law should be restricted to courts of the United States and the higher courts of record; second, to provide for uniformity in such proceedings; third, to require the judge's signature to every declaration and certificate; fourth, to require records to be kept; fifth (and this, with the record of the court, is the main point), to authorize letters of naturalization to be issued after four years' residence, but not to take effect till one year after date. On the motion of New York, to lay these instructions on the table, the House was divided—yeas, 33; nays, 123—a strict party vote, the Republicans in the negative. From this we may safely predict that some general bill of the character indicated will be passed at this session. The main points are the removal of this naturalization business to the United States courts and the stopping of the electioneering naturalization mills on the eve of our political elections by requiring the certificate of citizenship a year in advance and a record thereof. Some such bill, we understand, has been resolved upon by the Republicans in Congress, in consequence of certain alleged wholesale Democratic naturalization frauds in the late Philadelphia October elections and in our New York City November elections.

Southern reconstruction is in a very slipshod condition, and will require much patching. Georgia is out of gear, Florida is in a muddle, Louisiana has been turned topsyturvy, with the negroes at the bottom, which will never do; Arkansas is given over to ruffianism, and even Tennessee is a shocking example of law and order. These belong to the reconstructed States, and two or three of them at least are to be reconstructed over again. Of course the unreconstructed States of Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas will be put through the ordeal of the new constitutional amendment without much ceremony; but in this amendment itself there lies to the radicals a serious difficulty in the matter of negro suffrage, and the removal of this difficulty is now the main question.

General Grant, as we are informed from good authority, is in favor of a new constitutional amendment establishing universal manhood suffrage as the supreme law of the land. The difficulty under amendment fourteen is that each State may regulate suffrage to suit itself on the universal plan, or by a color qualification, a property qualification, or an educational qualification, or all of these, subject only to a reduction in counting the people for representation in proportion to the restriction of the suffrage. Thus, if the blacks are excluded from the suffrage, they are not to be counted for representation; and under this plan South Carolina, for example, would be cut out of more than half her delegation in the lower house of Congress and half her Presidential vote. But still it is feared that the whites of the Southern States, if left to themselves, under amendment fourteen, will soon contrive to take the suffrage from the negroes, and hence the desire of the radicals to make universal suffrage—negroes and all—mandatory upon all the States. General Grant proposes to settle the matter beyond dispute through an amendment to the Constitution, but Mr. Senator Sumner proposes the shorter method of universal negro suffrage by act of Congress, holding that Congress, under "the Constitution as it is," has ample power over the subject.

Whether the plan advocated by General Grant or the proposition of Senator Sumner shall prevail is the question for the two houses to settle. It is possible that the 4th of March may come round before a settlement is reached. Meantime, while these questions of naturalization, reconstruction, and universal negro suffrage are before the two houses, we cannot expect any material measures of relief to the country in the matter of the national debt, the national currency, the national tax bills, and the enormous budget of fraud upon the revenue, from Kentucky whisky to French brandy, and from Havana cigars to the home-made article. The Fortieth Congress is not up to the mark of retrenchment and reform. Its record is a budget of blunders, extravagances, profligacies, and corruptions, and the Forty-first Congress, which meets on the 4th of March, may perhaps be fruitful of better things, from the hints and recommendations of President Grant. We are compelled at last to turn to him as the hope of the country. There are no signs of relief from the present short session of the demoralized and expiring Fortieth Congress.

More Radical "Respectability."

From the N. Y. World.

The world has laughed for a good many years at the polite French preacher who, delivering a sermon on death before the Court of Louis le Grand, and perceiving that the King winced at the words "we shall all die," immediately corrected himself with the merest hint of a gesture towards the royal pew, and added the qualifying phrase, "that is to say, the most of us!"

The Tribune matches the courtly French divine. "The honest fulfillment," says H. G., "when possible of an obligation is preferable to the dishonest evasion and repudiation thereof." Really! But if the "honest fulfillment" proves not to be possible, one is then at liberty to evade his obligation dishonestly and to repudiate it? And so, in like manner, while one should tell the truth "when convenient," one is quite at liberty to tell any number of lies, the truth being inconvenient? "Put money in thy purse," honestly "when convenient" but at all events "put money in thy purse." No wonder the journal which entertains such exalted notions of the principles of probity thinks Mr. M. H. Grinnell and Mr. William E. D. Jr. models of political purity, and heads Judge Kiley's wilful and reckless slanders upon the dead as "An interesting Historical Disquisition."

The English Elections.

From the N. Y. World.

The great argument for the late extension of the suffrage in England appears to have been that as the landed interest, and the commercial and educational and Church and manufacturing interests, had direct representation, so the laboring interest, lying at the base of all the others, should have it too. Subsidiary to this was the cry that if labor problems must have solution, Parliament would be best

assisted thereto by the presence within it of men personally cognizant of those issues, and able thereby to give views at first hand of what labor really did want. The results of the elections do not justify these predictions. In the first place not a workman has been elected, and labor, which was given suffrage that it might speak for itself, and not through others, now that it has the suffrage uses it only to say that it liked the old manner of intermediary representation, and votes to have it continue. In the next place, this intermediary representation, thus indorsed, is indorsed with a qualifying declaration that, things being equal otherwise, the workman's vote goes for wealth or title rather than for intellectual distinction or university repute. As the Spectator puts it, the newly enfranchised "crave tangible signs of position and success—a baronetcy, even though tacked to a disreputable political reputation—a millionaire rather than a half-known man of promise of their own constituency." Or, in other words, an Englishman loves a lord, and the only difference between the unenfranchised and the enfranchised workman is that in the one case he did not vote for the "lord" and in the other case he does.

Failure of the Reform bill to provide workman representation for workmen; preference by workmen of wealth or title over intellectual merit only; and evidence that workmen, as a class, are altogether of liberal politics, and not Conservative, are the three main developments of the English elections. It may be that later advice may to some extent modify the force of these facts, but it is thought not. To counterbalance the not encouraging results marked by them, there is but one result, and an honorable and praiseworthy trait it shows—the workman has gone for the Liberals, though the Liberals mean "justice to Ireland," and the Irish are far from liked by, or even tolerable to, the English workman.

Mr. Jencks' Civil Service Bill.

From the Chicago Republican.

Incomparably the most important measure pending before the grand council of the nation is Mr. Jencks' bill to secure urgently-needed reforms in the civil service of the United States. We sincerely hope that the press of the country, breaking loose from partisan entanglements, and casting aside partisan prejudices, will unite in seizing the present golden opportunity to press upon Senators and Representatives the duty they owe the people to extirpate the official incompetency and corruption which, like some huge, malignant, internal cancer, are slowly but surely eating out the vitals of the Republic. The exigency of the case cries aloud for prompt interposition. Unless powerfully retroactive influences are set at work, the present system of dispensing public patronage, founded on dangerous and great errors, will degenerate and devour the whole nation in a few decades more; substitute falsehood, injustice, fraud, artifice, slander and breach of faith, as legitimate weapons, for principle, argument, and patriotic devotion in deciding elections; and finally and by subverting our free institutions. These are not the words of an alarmist, but of one who has investigated the situation in the light of recent experience, and of the broader teachings of general history.

To exemplify. Our civil service comprises over 500,000 office-holders, or numbers larger than all our soldiers and sailors, and their officers, in our army and navy, under existing laws. The appointment of this vast body of officers is vested, by the Constitution and acts of Congress, in the President, or in the heads of departments, or in the national judiciary. That part of the patronage, however, which thus appertains to the courts is limited to a mere handful. Gradually there has grown up a well-understood and continually practiced custom of considering this multitude of places of honor and profit as the spoils of victory, in direct violation of the principle which obtained during all the administrations anterior to Jackson's, and of employing these stations as so many prizes to be distributed among the members of the triumphant party in reward for merely partisan services.

In its progression this custom has grown into a practice which subverts the appointing power from what it was intended to be by the founders of our political system; for, in most cases, the President and heads of departments are only theoretically the depositaries of patronage, while its real dispensers are Senators, Representatives, and others in high official station in the several States, whose recommendations are very potent in securing office for their beneficiaries. Every Congressman is understood to exercise a large measure of authority in controlling the appointments to be made for his district. In this way it often happens that an aspirant for some high elective position secures his nomination by pledges of his influence to this and that man to obtain for them designated places under the Government. Thus obsequiousness and availability are made to operate in the selection of candidates far more than capability, integrity, and the welfare of the people. Under such a deplorable system, fitness for the position station naturally and inevitably becomes less and less a governing consideration. Intellect and purity, scorning the creeping and crawling and artifice which must ordinarily be practised to reach office, give way to demagogues and incompetents who have no such scruples. Merely partisan machinery takes the place which properly belongs to the unrestricted voice of the people, and tends more and more to bestow emoluments and power upon the least meritorious of the community.

The demagogues, the cunning hordes, the dock-yards, with all the multitudinous positions, are transformed into nurseries of incompetence, inefficiency, laziness, useless expense, and downright defraudment, instead of being what they really should be—fosterers of capability, efficiency, zeal, economy, and official honesty.

Every four years a war is waged for the possession of the offices. The Presidential contest, while ostensibly founded on opposing principles of policy and measures of administration, receives its vitalizing energies mainly from a consideration of the spoils of victory. That consideration multiplies the number of stump-speakers, augments the contributions of money to defray the expenses of mass meetings, grand processions, and magnificent demonstrations of other kinds. Party organization is thus made to extend from the office of town constable, in unbroken series, up to President of the United States. Under the prevailing plan of distributing the offices as rewards for partisan services, elections are fast losing their proper functions, and degenerating into fierce and unscrupulous struggles for the honors and emoluments of the Government. When a whole people become corrupted politically, they become corrupted morally. As our scheme of polity depends for its perpetuity upon the virtue, intelligence, and patriotism of our citizens, it is plain that everything which operates to debauch and destroy these props of representative institutions must be radically defective in theory and dangerous in practice.

The present immense amount of patronage within the gift of the General Government certainly never could have been foreseen by the founders of the republic, else they would

have made ample provisions in the Constitution against such an outgrowth of evils. Under Washington the numbers engaged in our civil service were a mere handful. In 1802, under Jefferson, they had increased, according to official report, to 713 persons, or less than the present force in the New York Custom House alone, and their annual compensation amounted to \$439,567. Such were the insignificant beginnings of the "Blue Book," which contains the names of some 53,000 individuals in the civil service, costing a yearly expenditure of about \$30,000,000. This overwhelming patronage, representing the tax-consuming portion of the community, is destined to enlarge instead of diminish. As our Western frontiers grow up into States, the offices within the gift of the Government will constantly augment. Thus the evils which the present system entails must increase with the roll of years.

Mr. Jencks' bill provides an effectual remedy. His plan opens every appointment which does not require the advice and consent of the Senate, except of postmasters, to competitive examination, without reference to politics, regarding only the applicant's age, health, character, knowledge, and ability in respect of the branch of service into which he seeks to enter. If accepted, he enters upon his duties on probation. Having passed that satisfactorily, his place is made permanent, depending alone on his meritorious performance. By exhibiting remarkable aptitude or decided talent, he may look forward confidently to reasonable promotion. In no event can his tenure be unsettled by the vicissitudes of parties.

In this way, office seeking and office giving may be withdrawn wholly from the arena of public patronage, and the system of favoritism and emolument, the corruptions which disgrace our elections and distort our legislation, deprived of the stimulus which sustained and promoted them, would be brought to an end. Incompetency and infidelity would be driven from place and power. Office-holders would have the strongest inducements for a faithful and independent discharge of their respective functions. The industries would no longer be required to perform double work, that the despotic drones and the political parasites might hold insecure positions. Efficiency, fidelity, and retrenchment would gradually invade every department of the civil service, where hitherto incapacity, laziness, collusion, negligence, blunders, and sometimes downright embezzlement, have held high carnival.

The principle of Mr. Jencks' bill cannot be very much longer withheld from the statute-book. The masses of the people are beginning to comprehend the situation. The honest portion of the press will further enlighten them. Ere long the people, tired of delay, will exhibit restlessness and signs of coming indignation, which will override the present policy of nomination conventions and the intrigues of self-aggrandizing cliques. Then the men who resist the present plan of amelioration from purely individual considerations may prepare to reap as they have sown. Meanwhile let them bear in mind that wise saying of Mignet, the great French historian, "When reform has become necessary, and the period of its accomplishment has arrived, attempts to still it tend only to hasten its progress."

The Cole-Hiscock Murder.

From the N. Y. Times.

The jury found in the Cole case that Cole was perfectly sane the instant before shooting Hiscock, and perfectly sane the instant after; but whether he was sane or not at the exact moment of doing it, the intelligent jury was in doubt; and, giving the prisoner the benefit of that doubt, under the instructions of the Court, they acquitted him of the charge.

Probably this is the most extraordinary verdict ever rendered by a jury made up of men supposed to be sane themselves. The theory on which it is based is of universal application, and dispenses with every rule of common sense, as well as of common law, in murder trials. Indeed, it makes all such trials ridiculous, and converts them into the broadest and most absurd of farces. We venture to say that no murder, or other crime, was ever committed, in which precisely the same doubt might not have been entertained with just as much reason. It is the belief of a certain school of philosophers that all crime is a species of insanity, and that no thoroughly sane man would or could ever commit a crime. The Albany verdict gives this theory a practical sanction and indorsement. That it will promote the security of life, or will, indeed, in the long run, be found compatible with the existence of a society of law and order, may well be doubted.

It is to be noticed that the jury in the case, to reach the foregoing conclusion they had resolved upon, was forced to invent a theory of defense for themselves. The one presented by Cole's counsel broke down utterly. It was at first alleged that Hiscock had committed a rape on Cole's wife. That was abandoned, but it was then said that he had attempted it, but failed. This, too, was thrown aside, and then it was alleged that his offense was simple adultery, the wife, of course, being an assenting party. But all these pleas were thrown out, and then it was insisted that, in consequence of a hurt in the war, Cole's mental faculties were impaired, and he had become virtually insane. Various acts and mental moods, at various times, were proved to sustain this theory, and a good deal of stress was laid upon it.

But the jury made short work with them all. They rejected them all as so much rubbish. It was not important to show that Cole ever had been insane before or after the killing of Hiscock, but only at that precise time. Having fixed upon the result, the verdict they reached, the jury tried, the theory they needed to sustain the case. They paid no heed to evidence—they did not need it. They were quite equal to the emergency themselves. During all the time Cole was making his preparations to kill Hiscock—while he was procuring a pistol, arranging his plans, writing letters to screen himself and traveling to find his victim, he was perfectly sane; the instant after the murder, he becomes sane again—but at the moment of stepping up behind Hiscock and shooting him through the head, the jury have doubts whether he was perfectly sane or not; and, therefore, he goes free! If one man wants to kill another for any reason whatever, without being hung or punished for it, we see nothing new in the way. The Albany jury has made murder easy and safe. That is, it would be so, if it could be supposed that such another jury could ever be got together again, for the trial of such a crime.

Facts for the South.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

What deters immigrants from going South is, if we can trust the Mobile Tribune, "the chicken-stealing negro and the Treasury-robbing carpet-bagger." And the Tribune goes on to say of the latter: "There is not a right-minded man, North or South, but knows that every one of these men, by the usurpations of which he has been guilty, is deserving of death. Men who steal offices from the people, and appropriate the people's money contrary to their wishes, deserve the penalty of death. Any Southern man might put one of these wretches to death, and retain afterward a conscience as clear as if he had merely killed a snake, and yet not a single one of them has been so much as bastinadoed for the public crimes he daily commits." Such being the condition of things in the South, Northern immigrants desirous of earning an honest living refuse to come. But still they are invited to come, the field is tempting, and "if General Grant does not make the carpet-baggers behave, they will all form a White Soil party that will!"

Such language does the Southern people immense harm, and the reason assigned for the refusal of Northern men to immigrate South is so far from the truth that if there were no carpet-baggers and no negroes, and if the country were entirely peaceful, the Northern people would not go thither now, because they are not ready. There are large quantities of Western land which can be taken up under the Homestead law, or which can be had of railroads, or be bought, second-hand, at lower prices than Southern lands are offered for. Until there is a population west of the Mississippi greater than in the whole South, there will be comparatively little immigration southward.

The considerations of climate, or what is the same thing, health, of rich soil, of long lines of railroad, and congenial society, make inducements such as the South cannot offer either to the people of the Northern States or to Europeans. These are facts which the Southern people will do well to consider. That is all that they can do to go to work—to call in and create skill, to live in peace, to multiply and replenish, and they will find use for all their lands. After they shall have fairly tried to live within themselves and failed, it will be time enough to call upon Northern people; but let it be remembered that the North will respond to no invitation until these back lands are peopled—that is, until there are people to spare.

"Blood Tells." From "Brick" Pomeroy's N. Y. Democrat. At a meeting of Partisans in Boston last week, one of the speakers remarked—it must have been an inadvertence—that "it was blood" that told in civilization as well as in the pugilistic ring. To our mind this is coupling two very incongruous things. But it seems that the speaker is above it all. Perhaps this is what they call "muscular Christianity." Then, again, about that "blood." The only "blood" held in any esteem down there is negro blood, and we have never learned that in that there was any element of civilization—certainly, in all the history of the race it never civilized a single human being. These people are talking worse nonsense than ever, unless they are really abandoning their false theories and coming to acknowledge the superiority of "blood" of the master race of the world, which they have so long and so fatally denied. It is this that was meant by the remark we have cited above. It is an axiom of good, and a sign of reaction which the friends of truth cannot do otherwise than rejoice at. We are not sure that it may not be profitable to give these people our careful attention. It may be that the seed which the positive Democracy has been sowing is preparing to bring forth fruit. It will sooner or later spring into life and yield an abundant harvest. The time may be nearer at hand than we have supposed. Friends, let us be of good cheer.

Y. P. M.

Y. P. M. Y. P. M. Y. P. M.

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UNION LEAGUE HOUSE, BROAD STREET.

The Annual Meeting of the UNION LEAGUE OF PHILADELPHIA will be held at the LEAGUE HOUSE on MONDAY EVENING, December 14, at 7 o'clock, at which meeting there will be an Election for Officers and Directors for the ensuing year.

GEORGE H. BOKES, Secretary.

PENNsylvania RAILROAD COMPANY, TREASURER'S DEPARTMENT.

PHILADELPHIA, Pa., December 3, 1868.

NOTICE TO STOCKHOLDERS.

The second instalment on the new stock subscribed for under resolution of the Board of Directors of May, 1868, is now due.

Unless paid on or before the 15th instant the instalment will not draw its proportion of dividend due May, 1869, and those paying up ALL the remaining instalments will receive full dividends in May next.

THOMAS T. FIRTH, Treasurer.

CITY TREASURER'S OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 1, 1868.

NOTICE.—The Semi-annual Interest on the five and six per cent. loans of the City of Philadelphia due January 1, 1869, will be paid on and after that date.

Loans maturing January, 1869, will be paid on presentation, interest ceasing from date of maturity.

The ordinance of Councils approved May 9, 1868, directing that "all certificates of city loans shall be registered previous to the payment of the interest," will be strictly adhered to at the payment of the interest due January, 1869, to both resident and non-resident loan-holders.

JOSEPH N. PERKINS, City Treasurer.

PUBLIC NOTICE—DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HIGHWAYS, OFFICE OF CHIEF COMMISSIONER, FIFTH STREET (west side), below Chestnut.

All persons interested in the construction of the Sever on the line of Washington avenue from Broad street to Seventh street, and on the line of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad from the line of the Sever to the line of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, will take notice that the bills on the several estimates are about to be made out in favor of the contractor, and all persons having claims against the same for labor or material will present them for payment at this office.

MAHLON H. DICKINSON, Chief Commissioner of Highways.

OFFICE OF THE LEHIGH COAL AND NAVIGATION COMPANY, TREASURY DEPARTMENT.

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 8, 1868.

Certificates due on the 1st instant on the gold loan of the company will be paid in cash at their office on and after that date.

Holders of ten or more coupons are requested to present them and receive therefor receipts on or before the 15th.

SOLOMON SHEPHERD, Treasurer.

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